

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DURBAN 00266 021453Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-02 SP-02 /025 W

-----130349 021505Z /72

P 010935Z MAY 78

FM AMCONSUL DURBAN

TO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY

INFO USICA WASHDC PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2904

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG PRIORITY

UNCLAS DURBAN 0266

USICA

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY, CHARGE

EO 11652: NA

SUBJ: ROOTS

REF: DURBAN 263

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF EDITORIAL IN APRIL 29 EDITION OF
"NATAL WITNESS". BEGIN TEXT:

THE FORCED CANCELLATION OF THE LAST EPISODES OF THE AMERICAN
TELEVISION SERIES, ROOTS, WHICH WAS BEING SHOWN AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, IS A SORRY BUSINESS INDEED. THE
UNIVERSITY, WHICH WAS SHOWING THE SERIES IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTRE IN DURBAN, WITHDREW THE SERIES
AFTER A VISIT FROM THE VICE SQUAD ACTING ON A COMPLAINT BY A
MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC.

IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE SERIES HAD NOT BEEN REVIEWED BY THE
PUBLICATIONS CONTROL BOARD -- BUT WHATEVER THE LEGAL NICETIES
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THE INDICENT IS DEPLORABLE. ROOTS, WHICH IS A PORTRAYAL OF
BLACK SLAVERY IN AMERICA, WAS SCREENED BY THE ABC NETWORK IN
THE UNITED STATES LAST YEAR -- WHERE IT RANKED AMONG THE
ALL-TIME TOP TEN IN TV RATINGS. BLACK LEADERS HAILED IT AS
AN IMPORTANT CIVIL RIGHTS EVENT. IRONICALLY, WITH SOUTH
AFRICA INCREASINGLY UNDER PRESSURE, SOUTH AFRICAN AUDIENCES
MIGHT HAVE LEARNT FROM IT TO SEE THEIR TROUBLES IN A WIDER

PERSPECTIVE, AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF AMERICAN SLAVERY AND INJUSTICE.

THE CANCELLATION OF ROOTS IN SOUTH AFRICA IS NEWS -- IT IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE WIDE PUBLICITY IN THE UNITED STATES, AND THE 130 MILLION AMERICANS WHO WATCHED THE SERIES ARE NOT LIKELY TO TROUBLE THEMSELVES WITH THE LEGAL NICETIES OF THE SITUATION. THE MESSAGE THAT WILL COME ACROSS IS THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS PREVENTED ROOTS FROM BEING SCREENED. IT IS THUS THAT WE CULTIVATE ADVERSE PUBLICITY -- AND THE ACTION OF AN OFFICIOUS MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC GOES A LONG WAY TOWARDS UNDOING MR. PIK BOTHA'S EFFORTS OVERSEAS.
END TEXT.
HUGHES

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FILMS, CENSORSHIP
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DURBAN00266
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780186-1166
Format: TEL
From: DURBAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197805106/aaaadmtd.tel
Line Count: 76
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 00b4a494-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 DURBAN 263
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2532961
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROOTS
TAGS: SCUL, SF
To: CAPE TOWN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/00b4a494-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014